AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A process of producing a superabsorbent polysaccharide derivative, comprising the sequential steps of:

(a) crosslinking at least one polysaccharide containing acidic groups with a crosslinking agent to produce a gel;

(b) ensuring that the pH of the polysaccharide is between 3.5 and 5.5;

(c) comminuting the acidified polysaccharide gel; and

(d) drying the comminuted polysaccharide at elevated temperature.

Claim 2 (original) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises carboxymethyl-cellulose, further comprising the step of contacting the crosslinked polysaccharide with an organic solvent which is at least partly miscible with water, between step (b) and step (c).

Claim 3 (currently amended) A processing according to claim 2, in which said organic solvent is a lower alcohol, a water-miscible ketone or a water-miscible ether, ~~especially methanol or ethanol~~.

Claim 4 (original) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups is a carboxymethyl polysaccharide further containing carboxyl groups resulting from oxidation of saccharidic hydroxymethyl or hydroxymethylene groups, or phosphonic or sulphonic acid groups.

Claim 5 (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises a 6-carboxy polysaccharide~~, especially 6-carboxy starch, optionally mixed with a carboxyalkylated polysaccharide~~.

Claim 6 (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups contains 0.3-3.0 carboxyl groups per monosaccharide unit.

Claim 7 (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said cross-linking agent is a bis-epoxy compound, and the polysaccharide is acidified before step (a).

Claim 8 (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, in which said crosslinking step is performed at a temperature of at least 100°C~~, preferably between 120 and 180°C~~ and/or at a concentration of the polysaccharide of between 25 and 75% by weight.

Claim 9 (currently amended) A process according to claim 8, in which a ~~plasticiser such as glycerol~~ plasticizer is used during said crosslinking step.

Claim 10 (currently amended) A process according to claim 1, in which said drying step (d) is performed using a ~~fluidised~~ fluidized bed, at a temperature of between 50 and 130°C.

Claim 11 (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said drying step (d) is followed by a heat treatment at a temperature of between 80 and 150°C.

Claim 12 (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which an additional surface-crosslinking step is performed after step (c) or after step (d).

Claim 13 (currently amended) Superabsorbent polysaccharide derivative ~~obtainable~~ obtained by the process according to claim 1, and having a pH below 5.

Claim 14 (original) Superabsorbent polysaccharide according to claim 13, also comprising an acid selected from organic di- and polycarboxylic acids, hydroxycarboxylic acids and benzoic acids.

Claim 15 (previously presented) Absorbent article comprising a superabsorbent polysaccharide according to claim 13.

Claim 16 (new) A process according to claim 2, in which said organic solvent is methanol or ethanol.

Claim 17 (new) A process according to claim 5, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises 6-carboxy starch.

Claim 18 (new) A process according to claim 5, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises a 6-carboxy polysaccharide mixed with a carboxyalkylated polysaccharide.

Claim 19 (new) A process according to claim 1, in which said crosslinking step is performed at a temperature of between 120 and 180°C.

Claim 20 (new) A process according to claim 9, in which glycerol is used as a plasticizer.